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**WHEN CONSUMERS ACTIVATE  
PERSUASION KNOWLEDGE:  
REVIEW OF ANTECEDENTS  
AND CONSEQUENCES**

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**Keywords and phrases:** marketing stimuli; influence tactics; persuasion knowledge; consumer response.

**Abstract:** The article aims to complexly examine the role of persuasion knowledge activation in consumer response. To handle the purpose, the author reviews the related studies published since 1994 when the term "persuasion knowledge" was introduced to scientific discourse. The literature review shows that persuasion knowledge activation is mainly associated with negative consequences for firms resulting in a more critical assessment of marketing stimuli by consumers, less favorable judgements and behavior in relation to firms and brands. Besides, there is empirical evidence that consumers can activate persuasion knowledge even in the absence of firms' persuasion intent. Ultimately, the effect of persuasion knowledge activation on consumer response to marketing stimuli is dependent upon a variety of moderating factors and intrinsic characteristics of the phenomenon addressed in a particular study. The study contributes to persuasion knowledge literature by combining conceptual theorizations articulated in the seminal article by Friestad and Wright with empirical evidence appeared afterwards, so the theory is enriched and clarified.

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## **Contents**

<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Consumer Response to Marketing Stimuli: Persuasion Knowledge Perspective.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Persuasion Knowledge: Terminological Analysis.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Antecedents of Persuasion Knowledge Activation.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Consequences of Persuasion Knowledge Activation.....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>References.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Appendices.....</b>	<b>21</b>

# **When Consumers Activate Persuasion Knowledge: Review of Antecedents and Consequences**

## **Introduction**

Companies invest significant resources in consumer research. Understanding the peculiarities of consumer behavior in the market allows companies to take strategic and tactical actions that are more convincing for consumers and, as a consequence, more effective for the firm. Consumers, like companies, accumulate information and knowledge about the market mechanisms through personal experience, media exposure or other sources. A special type of knowledge consumers develop over time is persuasion knowledge that includes consumer beliefs about marketing tactics used by firms to influence consumers.

Interest in research on persuasion knowledge is constantly increasing, as evidenced by the growing number of articles in this area (see Appendix 1). Existing research on the role of persuasion knowledge in consumer response to marketing stimuli embraces a wide range of marketing tools used in the field of advertising [Jewell, Barone, 2007], pricing [Hardesty et al., 2007], public relations [Foreh, Grier, 2003], interpersonal selling [Williams et al., 2004], brand management [Van Horen, Pieters, 2012], retail marketing [Lunardo, Mbengue, 2013], and others.

In spite of the fact that the studies are linked by common theoretical construct "persuasion knowledge", they are mostly fragmented and cover different aspects of the construct. Moreover, research results are quite diverse and there is a need of systematization.

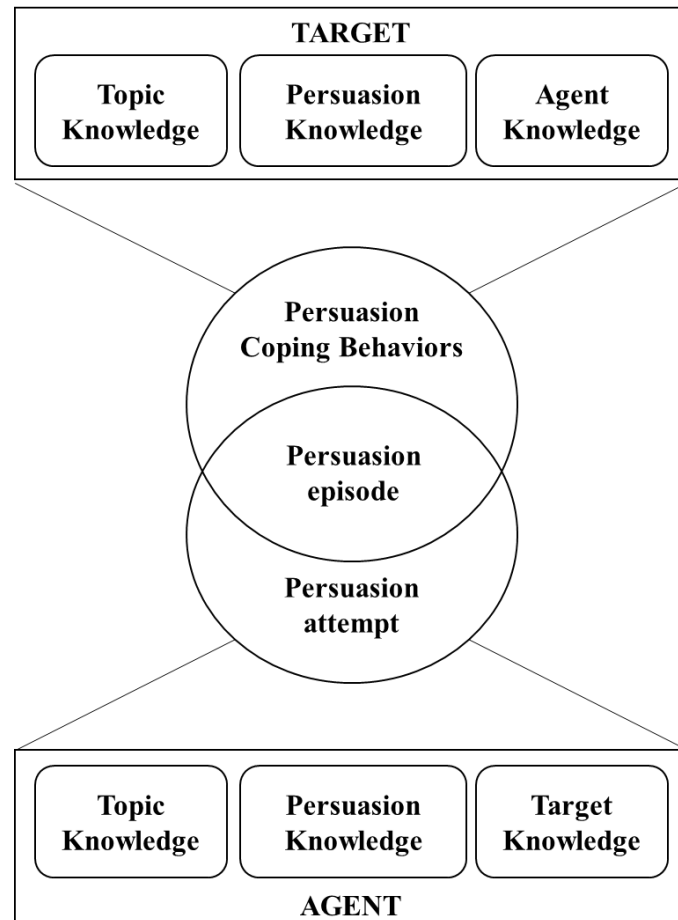
The purpose of this article is to develop an integrated model that clarifies the role of persuasion knowledge in consumer response to marketing stimulus. The article gathers empirical evidence on the problem of persuasion knowledge activation for the purpose of further theory development. Firstly, it sheds light on how different aspects of phenomenon are addressed in the extant studies, and shows how the studies are connected. Secondly, the author systematizes the antecedents and consequences of persuasion knowledge activation. Ultimately, future research directions are highlighted in the article.

In the first section of the article the author introduces persuasion knowledge model (PKM) [Friestad, Wright, 1994] as well as its adaptation to the consumer behavior context. The second section includes analysis of key concepts related to PKM and their relationships. The third and fourth sections summarize the antecedents and consequences of persuasion knowledge activation respectively. The article concludes with possible practical implications and promising directions for future research in this area.

## **Consumer Response to Marketing Stimuli: Persuasion Knowledge Perspective**

Interactions with consumers are the core of marketing practice. Inter alia, interactions include marketers' attempts to persuade and influence consumers using stimulus related to 4Ps [Kotler, Keller, 2012]. Consumer response to this stimulus is dependent upon a variety of individual and external factors, and persuasion knowledge is one of them.

The term "persuasion knowledge" was firstly coined in the seminal article by Friestad and Wright [1994]. The authors positioned persuasion knowledge as a part of a broader model – Persuasion Knowledge Model (PKM) – that embraces the key elements and mechanisms involved into persuasion episodes (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1. Persuasion Knowledge Model**

Source: [Friestad, Wright, 1994]

Persuasion (and influence) is a process that involves an agent and a target. The term "*targets*" refers to those people for whom a persuasion attempt is intended (e.g., consumers, voters). The term "*agent*" represent whomever a target identifies as being responsible for designing and constructing a persuasion attempt (e.g., the company responsible for an advertising campaign; an individual salesperson). *Persuasion attempt* describes the target's perception of an agent's strategic behavior in presenting information designed to influence someone's beliefs, attitudes, decisions, or actions (e.g., ad, sales presentation, or message). *Persuasion episode* implies a directly observable part of persuasion attempt, from consumers' point of view. For instance, if a consumer, when confronted with a particular advertising message, treats it as a company's attempt to persuade the consumer to buy the advertised product, the contact with an advertising message, per se, is regarded as a persuasion episode impacts and consumer thoughts about the nature, motives, and causes of persuasion tactics are perceived persuasion attempt. When the target recognizes persuasion attempt, he tries to cope with it. *Coping* can be in form of maintaining control over the outcome or more active resistance to a persuasion attempt.

Whether the consumer recognizes persuasion attempt or not, depends on consumer knowledge about an agent, topic, and persuasion, per se. *Agent knowledge* may be information regarding manufactures' credibility [Artz, Tybout, 1999]; *topic knowledge* may be information about brands [Wei, Fischer, Main, 2008] or issues raised in the message (e.g. environmental issues) [Xie, Kronrod, 2012]. The authors pay special attention to *persuasion knowledge* which is "a set of interrelated beliefs about (a) the psychological events that are instrumental to

persuasion, (b) the causes and effects of those events, (c) the importance of the events, (d) the extent to which people can control their psychological responses, (e) the temporal course of the persuasion process, and (f) the effectiveness and appropriateness of particular persuasion tactics” [Friestad, Wright, 1994]. The following elements (aspects) of persuasion knowledge are worth being highlighted:

- *Recognition of persuasion attempt* implies beliefs related to a mere acknowledgement that the marketing stimulus is used as a persuasion tool;
- *Inferences of persuasion motives* are beliefs about the possible end goals of marketer;
- *Beliefs about the effectiveness* of marketing tactics relate to how much the marketing stimulus may affect his mental processes and behavior;
- *Beliefs about the appropriateness* of marketing tactics are based on the comparison of the marketing tactics with the "rules of the game", including notions of fairness which are typically built into the culture, meaning they are shared by many members of the socio-cultural environment in which the consumer lives.

Persuasion knowledge is an important construct for consumers, because almost every interaction with marketing stimulus can be regarded as a persuasion episode, in which the company is trying to convince consumers that the product possesses some qualities, that the company is socially responsible, etc. and, thus, influence consumers’ behavior (for example, to persuade consumers to purchase the product). At the moment of interaction with a specific marketing stimulus consumer may use his accumulated knowledge to interpret the marketing stimulus and form an appropriate response to it.

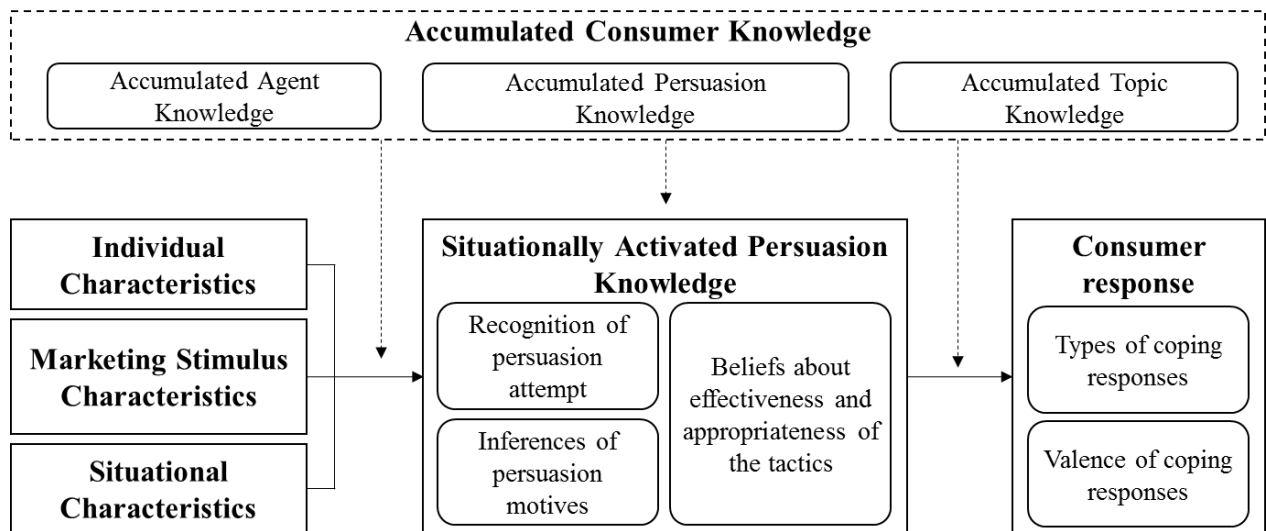
Consumers differ in the volume and content of persuasion knowledge (between-subject differentiation), which partly explains the differences in the interpretations, and consequently, in the reactions of different consumers to the same marketing stimulus. Furthermore, persuasion knowledge is a dynamic structure that may change over time due to various factors, so the consumer may have different volume and content of persuasion knowledge (within-subject differentiation) at different times, and interprets and responds to the same marketing stimulus differently.

To illustrate how consumer knowledge can influence the perception of a marketing stimulus, we refer to the study of Kasherski and Kim [2010], who examined consumer perceptions of different price presentation. They asked respondents "Why do you think some retailers indicate the price taking into account the cost of delivery (inclusive prices), while others indicate the cost of delivery separately (partitioned prices)?". Some respondents interpreted inclusive prices as a deliberate concealment of price structure that prevents the correct assessment of the price, and preferred partitioned price presentation; others perceived partitioned prices as a format that makes the consumer focus on the base price of the product and leads to an underestimation of the total costs, and preferred inclusive prices. Differences in interpretations suggest that different consumers have different views how different pricing tactics affect them and why firms use some tactics, which is, inter alia, due to differences in persuasion knowledge.

Consumer response to a marketing stimulus depend on whether the consumer perceives it as a deliberate persuasion attempt. Recognition of persuasion attempt entails a change in the consumer reaction to a given stimulus (“change of meaning” [Friestad, Wright, 1994]). To demonstrate this principle, we can refer to research on children perceptions of advertising. For example, Robertson and Rossiter [1974] found that when watching television commercials children can identify two types of advertising intents: informational ("commercials are designed to transmit facts and information") and persuasive ("commercials are designed to affect consumer attitude to the product or consumer buying behavior"). It was found that with age children more often prescribe to the advertising persuasive intents as opposed to informational intents, thus changing the interpretation of the commercial over time. Along with the change of

meaning there are changes in children's reaction to commercials: reduced confidence and deteriorating attitude towards commercials, decreased motivation to buy the advertised product, etc.

Persuasion knowledge is not the only factor that influences consumer interpretation of marketing stimuli. Figure 2 is a diagram integrating the antecedents and consequences of consumer persuasion knowledge activation, which, in the author's opinion, provides a comprehensive understanding of the role of persuasion knowledge activation in the consumer response to marketing stimuli. In more detail the model elements will be reviewed in the following paragraphs.



**Figure 2. Antecedents and Consequences of Persuasion Knowledge Activation**

Source: [Friestad, Wright, 1994; Campbell, Kirmani, 2008]

### Persuasion Knowledge: Terminological Analysis

Understanding the role of persuasion knowledge activation in consumer response to marketing stimuli is impossible without a clear understanding of distinctions and relations between the terms “accumulated persuasion knowledge” and “situationally activated persuasion knowledge” as well as their elements. Heretofore, accumulated persuasion knowledge is considered as consumer persuasion-related beliefs which the consumer has at a specific point in time and which have been accumulated on the basis of previous marketplace experiences or external information, and situationally activated persuasion knowledge is beliefs activated at the moment of exposure to a marketing stimulus [Campbell, Kirmani, 2008] (see Figure 2).

When exposed to a marketing stimulus, consumers may activate thoughts about the persuasion nature of a stimulus (How does the marketer persuade me?), about the firm's motives (Why does the marketer try to persuade me?), about the effectiveness and appropriateness of persuasion attempts (To what extent is a persuasion attempt effective and appropriate?). Undoubtedly, the distinction between the above mentioned elements is conditional and is undertaken in order to facilitate understanding of the possible directions of consumers' thoughts.

Researchers have shown that the more persuasion knowledge and expertise consumers possess, the more likely they recognize marketing tactics as persuasion attempts [Verlegh et al., 2013]. However, it is not universal. For instance, even when consumers know that firms can exaggerate the positive properties of the product in advertising to influence the consumer's opinion, they can fail to recognize the persuasion attempt at the moment of exposure to a

particular advertisement and believe the advertising information on the properties of the product under the influence of other factors.

Reinforcing and developing the ideas set out in the PKM, the researchers operate with a variety of terms, which are to some extent related to the concept of persuasion knowledge. An attempt to systematize the terminology used in the literature is undertaken in Table 1.



**Table 1. Overview of the Terms Related to Persuasion Knowledge**

Term	Source	Definition	Elements of persuasion knowledge				Nature of the construct	
			Awareness of persuasion tactics	Inferred motives	Effectiveness judgments	Fairness judgments	Accumulated	Situationally activated
Suspicion	[Fein 1996; Ferguson, et al., 2011]	Psychological state when a consumer assumes that an agent might have some hidden motive.	+	+			+	+
Advertising skepticism	[Obermiller, Spangenberg, 1998]	General tendency to distrust advertising messages.	+				+	
Situational skepticism	[Foreh, Grier, 2003]	Situational state of distrust to others and their motives.	+	+				+
Dispositional skepticism	[Foreh, Grier, 2003]	General tendency to distrust others.	+	+			+	
Sentiment toward marketing	[Gaski and Etzel, 1986]	General tendency to think that firms are customer-oriented or not.	+				+	
Inferred sincerity of the motives	[Yoon, Gürhan-Canli, Schwarz, 2006]	Judgements related to how agent's stated motives correspond to real motives.		+				+
Inferences of hidden motives	[Campbell, Kirmani, 2000]	Judgements about the presence of agent's hidden egoistic motives.		+				+
Prior knowledge about agents' motives	[Verlegh et al., 2013]	Consumer knowledge about agents' motives that has been accumulated prior to a particular episode of		+			+	

		consumer-agent interaction.						
Perceived effectiveness	[Xie, Johnson, 2015]	Consumer judgements related to how a tactic might influence himself and others.			+			
Perceived harm	[Xie, Madrigal, Boush, 2015]	Expected severity of negative consequences caused by a marketing tactic.			+	+		+
Inferences of manipulative intent	[Campbell, 1995]	Consumer judgements that an agent might have an intent to persuade or influence consumer in an inappropriate and manipulative manner.		+		+		+
Perceived deception	[Xie, Madrigal, Boush, 2015]	An extent to which a marketing tactic is perceived as deceptive or misleading.				+		+
Perceived procedural fairness	[Kukar-Kinney, Xia, Monroe, 2007]	Consumer judgements related to the correspondence of marketing tactics, procedures, and processes to the existing norms and rules.				+	+	+
Subjective persuasion knowledge	[Bearden et al., 2001]	Subjective consumers' evaluation of their knowledge of marketing tactics.	+	+			+	
Pricing tactics persuasion knowledge	[Hardesty et al., 2007]	Consumer knowledge of different pricing tactics used in the marketplace, their influence mechanisms, and agents' intents behind their usage.	+	+			+	

Terminological analysis revealed a significant number of terms used by researchers to describe consumers' perceptions of persuasion attempts. This terminological diversity can be explained with, at least, several reasons:

*a) The use of different terms to describe similar concepts in different contexts*

Inter alia, differences in terminology occur due to the existence of different research traditions. For example, researchers in the field of advertising used the construct "skepticism" long before the PKM [Nelson, 1975]. Researchers in the field of pricing have traditionally used the construct "fairness" to describe consumer judgments about the appropriateness of price setting procedures, price presentations, and established price levels [Campbell, 1999]. The later constructs "inferences of manipulative intent" and "perceived deception" are conceptually similar constructs used in another context.

*b) The use of different terms to describe different aspects of the phenomenon*

Researchers used a variety of ways to categorize consumer inferences of firms' motives. In particular, in the studies there have been used such dichotomous categories as "private vs public interests" [Foreh, Grier, 2003], "increase profits vs compensate of costs of production" [Campbell, 1999], and others.

Similarly, researchers of skepticism revealed a variety of aspects of the phenomenon: situational skepticism, suggesting the presence of the consumer of certain feelings or thoughts at some point of time, and dispositional skepticism associated with the general consumer attitudes to the world [Foreh, Grier, 2003].

*c) The use of different operationalization approaches*

Using different operationalization approaches is not a problem, per se. The difficulties arise when measurement scales relate to incommensurate concepts that are masked by a single term. For example, persuasion knowledge in the studies of Bearden et al. [2001] and Hardesty et al. [2007] is defined similarly, but operationalized using different scales which essentially measure the two different types of persuasion knowledge - subjective ( "what consumers think they knows") and objective ( "what consumers really know").

The use of different terms to describe similar concepts, due to differences in the historical trajectory of scientific fields, or the desire to highlight a particular aspect of the phenomenon does not bring to complications, provided that there is a clear understanding of the relationships between these concepts. Despite that, researchers have repeatedly argued for a more "economical" attitude towards the usage of terminology to avoid the theoretical and empirical contradictions caused by terminological negligence [Campbell, Kirmani, 2008].

### **Antecedents of Persuasion Knowledge Activation**

It is important to note that the accumulated consumer persuasion knowledge cannot always result in activation of persuasion-related inferences in a particular situation. The differences in the ability of consumers to activate persuasion knowledge can be due to a variety of factors, including:

*a) Individual characteristics*

Among the characteristics that have an impact on the ability to recognize persuasive nature of marketing stimuli, the age and field of consumer professional activities have been identified [Boush, Friestad, and Rose 1994; Friestad and Wright 1995]. Kirmani and Zhu [2007] examined the role of regulatory focus (regulatory focus characterizes the individual's strategy for achieving their goals) and came to the conclusion that consumers focused on achieving positive results are more likely to realize the persuasive nature of marketing stimuli than consumers focused on minimizing negative results.

*b) Marketing stimulus characteristics*

Some marketing incentives are more likely to be perceived as persuasion attempts. For example, commercials, wherein the disclosure of the advertised brand occurs only at the end with the purpose to attract consumer attention by creating a sense of suspense, are perceived by consumers as more manipulative than traditional commercials, where disclosure of the brand comes in the beginning [Campbell, 1995]. Partitioned prices that have already been mentioned in the article are more often perceived by consumers as "created with the intention to convince and influence" than inclusive prices [Kachersky, Kim, 2010].

*c) Situational characteristics*

For example, Campbell and Kirmani [2000] have shown that persuasion knowledge activation depends on whether the individual acts as a direct recipient or the observer of persuasion episode. The cognitive intensity of the situations differs. The recipient usually spends more cognitive resources to solve problems arisen within the episode than an observer. Thus, the recipient will have fewer cognitive resources to spend on persuasion-related inferences than the observer, so the observer is more inclined to recognize persuasion attempts than a direct participant in the episode of exposure.

### **Consequences of Persuasion Knowledge Activation**

In the existing literature there is a significant number of attempts undertaken to investigate the response of consumers to various marketing stimuli in a situation of persuasion knowledge activation. Research of the consequences of persuasion knowledge activation covers a wide range of marketing tools used in various fields of marketing practices. Despite the diversity of marketing stimulus, consumer response is exhibited in a limited number of "coping tactics":

- 1) Critical assessment of the product offering, counterargument and counterbehavior (the formation of attitudes and behaviors that are contrary to those instigated in the marketing stimulus);
- 2) Less favorable assessment of the marketing stimulus (in comparison with a situation where the consumer does not recognize persuasive nature of marketing stimulus);
- 3) Less favorable assessment of the product;
- 4) Weakening of consumer intentions and behaviors in relation to the product;
- 5) Less favorable assessment of the company initiating marketing tactics;
- 6) Less favorable assessment of related subjects (e.g. the sponsored event; distributor's products);
- 7) Supportiveness of the legal regulation of marketing activities.

Examples of the above stated coping responses are given in Table 2.

**Table 2. The Effect of Persuasion Knowledge Activation on Consumer Response to Marketing Stimulus**

Marketing area	Marketing stimulus	Source	Main findings	Type of response*
Advertising	Comparative advertising	[Jewell, Barone, 2007]	Within-category comparisons were perceived as a more appropriate tactic and were thus more effective in positioning the focal brand than were between-category comparisons.	2, 3
	Guilt appeals	[Hibbert et al., 2007; Cotte et al., 2005]	Guilt arousal is positively related to donation intention, and that persuasion and agent knowledge impact the extent of guilt aroused. Manipulative intent and the respondents' skepticism toward advertising tactics in general are negatively related to guilt arousal but that their affective evaluation and beliefs about a charity are positively related to feelings of guilt. However, there is a positive direct relationship between perceived manipulative intent and the intention to donate.	1, 2, 4, 5
	Brand placement	[Wei et al., 2008]	Persuasion knowledge activation can negatively affect consumer evaluations of embedded brands; however, negative effects are qualified by perceived appropriateness of covert marketing tactics and by brand familiarity. Further evidence indicates a condition under which activation can actually have a positive effect on consumer evaluations.	2, 5, 6
	Advertising frequency	[Campbell, Keller, 2003]	Negative thoughts about tactic inappropriateness were seen to arise with repetition, particularly for an ad for an unfamiliar brand, driving, in part, the decreases in repetition effectiveness.	2, 3
Pricing	Price increase	[Campbell, 1999]	When participants inferred that the firm had a negative motive for a price increase, the increase was perceived as significantly less fair than the same increase when participants inferred that the firm had a positive motive. Perceived unfairness leads to lower shopping intentions.	2, 4
	Tensile price claims	[Hardesty et al., 2007]	Individuals with higher levels of pricing tactic persuasion knowledge (PTPK) were shown to have more knowledge-related thoughts regarding pricing tactic information and exhibited more purchase interest following exposure to tensile claim offers than those with low levels of PTPK.	4
	Baseline omission	[Xie, Johnson, 2015]	Consumers tend to perceive baseline omission as more effective on others than on themselves. The self-others difference is more salient among consumers with more persuasion knowledge. Consumers' concerns about its effectiveness on themselves, rather than on others, better predict their supportiveness to regulate the use of baseline omission.	7
Interpersonal selling	Asking intention questions	[Williams et al., 2004]	When persuasive intent is attributed to an intention question, consumers adjust their behavior as long as they have sufficient cognitive capacity to permit conscious correction. When respondents are educated that an intention question is a persuasive attempt, the behavioral impact of those questions is attenuated.	1

Public Relations	Sponsorship	[Foreh, Grier, 2003]	Consumer evaluation of the sponsoring firm was lowest in conditions when firm-serving benefits were salient and the firm outwardly stated purely public-serving motives. The potential negative effects of skepticism were the most pronounced when individuals engaged in causal attribution prior to company evaluation.	5
	Video news releases	[Nelson, Park, 2015]	Viewers' beliefs about and perceptions of credibility in a news story are altered when they acquire persuasion knowledge about VNRs and learn that the source of the story was an unedited VNR.	2
Branding	Brand imitation	[Van Horen, Pieters, 2012]	Consumers consider feature imitation to be unacceptable and unfair, which causes reactance toward the copycat brand. Yet, even though consumers are aware of the use of theme imitation, it is perceived to be more acceptable and less unfair, which helps copycat evaluation.	2, 3
	Brand names and slogans	[Laran et al., 2011]	Brands cause priming effects (i.e., behavioral effects consistent with those implied by the brand), whereas slogans cause reverse priming effects (i.e., behavioral effects opposite to those implied by the slogan). For instance, exposure to the retailer brand name "Walmart," typically associated with saving money, reduces subsequent spending, whereas exposure to the Walmart slogan, "Save money. Live better," increases it.	1
Product policy	Versioning	[Gershoff, Kivetz, Keinan, 2012]	The production method of versioning may be perceived as unfair and unethical and lead to decreased purchase intentions for the brand.	2, 4
	Default options	[Brown, Krishna, 2004]	A default option can invoke a consumer's "marketplace metacognition," his/her social intelligence about marketplace behavior that leads to different predictions than accounts based on cognitive limitations or endowment: in particular, it predicts the possibility of negative or "backfire" default effects.	1
Retailing	Atmosphere of the retail store	[Lunardo, Mbengue, 2013]	Incongruent store environments urge consumers to make inferences of manipulative intent from the retailers, and that those inferences negatively influence consumer's perception of the retailers' integrity, and attitudes toward the atmosphere and the retailers.	5

\*The number in the row corresponds to the following coping tactics: [1] Critical assessment of the product offering, counterargument and counterbehavior; [2] Less favorable assessment of the marketing stimulus; [3] Less favorable assessment of the product; [4] Weakening of consumer intentions and behaviors in relation to the product; [5] Less favorable assessment of the company initiating marketing tactics; [6] Less favorable assessment of related subjects; [7] Supportiveness of the legal regulation of marketing activities.

Correction of judgment and behavior usually occurs in a direction opposite to that intended with marketing stimulus. Instead of the expected favorable attitude to the product and higher purchase likelihood, when consumers perceive marketing stimulus as a persuasion attempt, they tend to react in the opposite way: less favorable attitude toward the product, the manufacturer, as well as intermediaries involved in the process. This, as a result, reduces purchase likelihood and accelerates switching to competitive offerings. Moreover, the lack of trust between the consumer and the firm can lead to resistance to buy not only a particular product, but all products related to the firm [Reichheld, Schefter, 2000]. However, it is worth noting that despite the dominant number of adverse consequences for businesses resulting from persuasion knowledge activation, there is a precedent when persuasion knowledge activation had a positive impact on the assessment of the brand [Wei et al., 2008].

The above examples demonstrate the importance of consumer perceptions of marketing stimulus for consumers themselves, companies that initiate marketing activities, and intermediaries that implement marketing activities (e.g., distributors and media agencies). Let us consider in more detail the possible outcomes of firm-consumer interactions when persuasion knowledge is activated and inhibited (see Figure 3).

		<b>Consumer recognition of persuasion intent</b>	
		Yes	No
<b>Firm's intention to persuade</b>	Yes	<div> <div>Firm's disadvantage</div> <div>Equivalent interaction</div> <div>Consumer's disadvantage</div> </div>	Consumer's disadvantage
	No	<div> <div>Consumer's disadvantage</div> <div>Firm's disadvantage</div> </div>	Equivalent interaction

**Figure 3. Matrix of Firm-Consumer Interaction Outcomes**

An equivalent interaction can take place when neither the company intends to persuade the consumer, nor the consumer mistakenly attributes persuasion intent to marketing stimuli. However, this situation is very unlikely in the context of modern highly competitive environment wherein marketers use a wide arsenal of marketing tools to attract attention and retain customers. An equivalent interaction also occurs when a firm intention fully understood by the consumer and the firm correctly evaluates consumer persuasion knowledge that may affect its response to the tactics used. When a company has no information about consumer persuasion knowledge, it is in a vulnerable position, since the expected efficiency of the marketing stimulus may differ from the real effect produced by the use of the stimulus. That point highlights the importance for companies to study consumers under a new angle: not only consumers' perceptions of companies and products are important, but also their perceptions of marketing tools used by companies. If

the firm lacks understanding of this aspect, it could lead to a kind of "marketing myopia" [Levitt, 1960].

A situation when the consumer is not aware of persuasion intent, as a rule, leads to an unfavorable outcome for the consumer (e.g., psychological dissatisfaction or financial losses). It can occur when the consumer has insufficient amount of knowledge and experience. Such a situation may arise in the case of immature consumers (children and adolescents) [Robertson et al., 1974], consumers in the new or emerging market, who have not yet developed immunity to the marketing tactics of influence used by companies and are easily influenced by marketing tools [Feick, Gierl, 1996; La Ferle, Kuber, Edwards, 2013].

It is worth noting that despite persuasion knowledge allows consumers to use the arsenal of coping tactics in response to marketing persuasion attempts, it may not always be properly activated. As previously mentioned, the consumer may attribute to the firms' actions ulterior motives even in the absence of such intentions on the side of the firm [Koslow, 2000]. The reasons for such an outcome may be a false attribution of the recipient caused by excessive skepticism about marketing in general, about certain marketing tools, such as advertising, about certain products or firms. This situation, of course, is problematic for the company, because it reduces the effectiveness of a marketing stimulus. It can also lead to consumers' disadvantages, because it distorts objective information and prevents consumers from selecting the best alternative.

### **Conclusion**

Consumer persuasion knowledge plays an important role in the consumer response to various marketing stimuli. A review of the empirical studies has shown that, when consumers interpret marketing stimuli as persuasion attempts, firstly, they evaluate these marketing stimuli more critically and, secondly, modify their judgements and behavior with respect to marketing stimuli, related products and firms. Generally, this leads to adverse consequences for firms. However, it is not justified to claim that persuasion knowledge activation always results in unfavorable outcomes for companies. For instance, when consumers perceive persuasion attempt as "fair" or "appropriate", they cannot modify their behavior. Different persuasion-related beliefs as well as its antecedent and consequences are discussed in the article.

Given the persuasion knowledge has a significant effect of consumer response to marketing stimuli, it is reasonable for firms to include it in the list of permanently tracked consumer characteristics. Together with economic, demographic and other characteristics of consumers, persuasion knowledge can be regarded as a basis for consumer segmentation, so that firms can tailor marketing stimuli to each group of consumers. In addition to taking persuasion knowledge as given, firms can take an active part in their formation and management with the help of marketing communications and consumer education.

Despite the variety of empirical studies on persuasion knowledge, the conceptual core of the phenomenon remained unchanged and almost did not get a theoretical extension since the introduction of the concept into scientific discourse in 1994. Furthermore, some empirical studies have generated conflicting results, which provides fertile grounds for further researching and strengthening the theoretical foundations of persuasion knowledge. It seems promising to further test the relationship between accumulated and situationally activated persuasion knowledge, which has been done only once so far in [Verlegh et al., 2013]. It is also worth examining how persuasion knowledge change over time. The need to include into the economic theory some factors that take into account the ability of economic agents to learn their surroundings and change their economic behavior based on acquired information has been announced long before the PKM [Simon, 1959]. In the PKM it becomes even more appealing to



undertake longitudinal studies that trace consumer persuasion knowledge over time, because consumers are not "in a vacuum": they constantly update their knowledge and, in turn, alter the reaction to a marketing stimulus. Thus, the consumer reaction to the same marketing incentive may be different at different times, which certainly should be considered marketing practices in the planning and implementation of marketing activities aimed at consumers.

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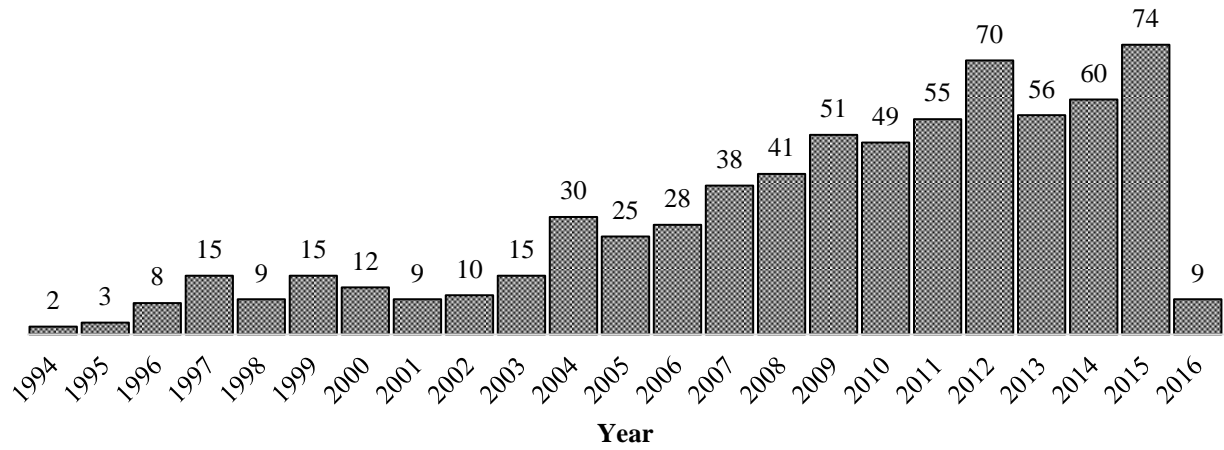
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## Appendices

### Appendix 1. The number of citations of the article "The persuasion knowledge model: How people cope with persuasion attempts" [Friestad, Wright, 1994]\* in Web of Science (on March, 12 2015)



\*The article has been repeatedly referred as a seminal conceptual paper that instigated research on persuasion knowledge in marketing context [Campbell, Kirmani, 2008; Ham, Nelson, Das, 2015].